

# BALCAN CAN CONTEM- PORARY SPACES



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The sixth issue of the BCC Magazine invites cultural workers and activists in the Balkans to discuss the dimensions of space for the arts and its production. The issue of securing venues for and by artists, within the general lack of such spaces, has proven to be the key factor for the advancement and development of contemporary arts in the Balkans. Those who do not have even an irregular access to working spaces are simply denied basic conditions to create as artists.

The inherited system of public venues and institutions dedicated to production and presentation of performing arts in the Balkans has been unable to respond to demands of contemporary trends in production that is dependent on mobility and international collaborations. Therefore, a parallel system has emerged in the recent years—one of independent artists run and established venues, makeshift galleries and presentations spaces, squatted abandoned factory halls, army barracks or other buildings. These have been at the front lines of housing innovative and experimental artists.

However, the next wave of needs became more than evident. After the basic non-discriminatory quest for spaces has been fruitful it is now time in the Balkans to make these spaces fully functional, technically equipped, develop a management operational system which will secure sustainability to these venues and their further advancement.

This issue of BCC brings us some thinking into the ways we understand venues, space in general (not only as physical buildings, but as wider public spaces), artworks' aesthetics defined by the production conditions and some models of operation and running such venues in the Balkans.

**Zvonimir Dobrović**

The occupying of a physical space, in the material structure of a city, always represents a particularly important, but also rather neuralgic point in cultural and artistic endeavours. The ambitions for the space are equally important to all forms of cultural activity, from those who seek to preserve cultural heritage and traditional forms, and those who insist on artistic excellence and innovation, to those who are dedicated to the social contribution of culture and to increasing participation in cultural life. Whether they are aiming to be representative or it is a critical consideration, those who are active in the cultural scene will, sooner or later, be directed towards a physical space. The reasons for this are, of course, very practical: it is always necessary to have a physical space in which to hold a particular cultural event, simply because it has to be located somewhere. Apart from that, space is extremely important for communication and for building audiences; it is a key element in the recognition of the organization and its program, or in other words, the continuity of its activities. The physical space also has a very important role on a symbolic level, in producing and communicating meaning and significance.

Finally, the question of public space, in the present context of the increasing privatization of space, has a very important political dimension. Those who make the decisions about what to build where, what type of content will (or won't) take place in which space under public (government, usually city council) control, clearly show the values and political aims of those in power. For example, the Zagreb Public Administration, headed by Mayor Bandić, with more or less explicit support from the current opposition in the City Assembly, has, for at least a decade, continuously implemented a so-called development policy (without significant development results) that has had a devastating effect on public space. One notorious example is the construction of the shopping centre on the Preradović Square (popularly known as Flower Square). The City of Zagreb not only permitted the construction of this commercial, not-at-all-public space, but even formally declared it to be in the public interest.

## **Politics Against Public Interest**

Open public space, that which is accessible to everyone, regardless of social or economic status, is, in Zagreb, gradually disappearing. The most obvious example is the growth in outdoor cafés that have flooded the city's squares and pavements. Alongside them dominate the so-called temporary facilities (stands, mobile cabins, large tents) that occupy space on the city's main square a roughly-estimated 350 days a year, at least. The central pedestrian zone is literally reduced to narrow passageways, outdoor corridors, through which one often struggles to pass, and even to retain. Thus, if you want to sit somewhere and read a book or talk to someone in that area, without paying 15-20 kuna (2-3 EUR) for a drink, you probably won't find a place, because there aren't actually any wooden benches, and the few wire ones that exist are literally part of (contaminated by) the aforementioned outdoor cafés, stands and other similar commercial establishments.

As well as in these open spaces, the city government also shows its entirely faulty policy in its management of its own buildings. Besides there being generally very little space for public use given to non-profit organizations, the Mayor's recent decision to radically increase the cost of the use of these spaces has a direct impact on civil society and is a clear indication of a deeply anti-social (and asocial) policy. Those affected by the price increases of 300 percent or more are those in this city who are trying to act for the common good. Those harmed are cultural organizations that help children and parents, that deal with under-represented social groups (eg. the LGBTIQ population, women, problem youth, people with disabilities, etc.), those that have long proven that through their actions they directly affect the development of democracy, those that advocate for transparent government and administration of the political system (eg. GONG and Transparency International Croatia). The inadequate excuse for such behaviour is the financial crisis. But at the same time, there is enough money for, for example,



Pogon, the Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth



Autonomous Cultural Centre Medika

such failed models as the so-called private-public partnerships: the City of Zagreb paid 50-60 million kuna (6.8-8 mio EUR) for the use of the sports stadium Arena, which is more than the total invested in independent cultural production, and is for the benefit of only a few people - those who can afford tickets - and for only infrequent events, which are often the worst commercial kitsch). There is also money for the planned but completely unnecessary new paving in Flower Square, which is being done just because it would be better if the colours of the square matched the colours of the recently built shopping centre. And all this despite (or to spite) the clearly articulated and broad opposition from citizens.

### Infrastructure for Culture in Zagreb

In terms of cultural infrastructure, things do not look any better. Those responsible for the past many years in Zagreb have done very little, and even then have found only half-solutions. Although some new facilities have been built, the problems have not been completely resolved, but have rather new problems have been created. After decades of planning the Museum of Contemporary Art was built, but the problem here is not just that no one considered the idea of investment in the development of innovative, modern practices of flexible programming and communication with the public that arises from the specific location of the museum in the so-called bedroom suburb of Novi Zagreb, but also the notorious fact that the new building would bring new expenses was completely ignored. It took two years of wrangling, debate in the newspapers, and who knows how many meetings before the owners of the museum (the City) understood the idea that the cost of electricity for a large building can not be the same as for a small building. So much for strategic thinking.

Another example is the Zagreb Dance Center, which is a complete infrastructure (although some would say it is not quite adequate for its purposes), but which has no adequate solution for the management and maintenance of the premises. Thus, the organization that manages the space (HIPP) not only covers all the expenses for so-called passive standby operation, but also pays rent to the city, and this for performing a clearly defined public function, which is, and must be, in the public interest. As a market for this kind of space can not exist, these costs are currently covered either out of city money that is earmarked for programming or from the contributions from independent dance groups that produce and perform their own programs in the centre.

A third, somewhat contrary example that is worth emphasizing is the Autonomous Cultural Centre Medika. This makeshift independent cultural centre is used by many organizations, initiatives and individuals, whom the city apparently does not dare to directly evict from the space, and so it is trying to do so through bureaucratic exhaustion (as they did a couple of years ago with the cultural club, Mocvara): for several months now they have not wanted to either extend or cancel the contract of use, but have regularly sent rent invoices that are several times higher than before. It seems no use pointing out that when Attack! and other organisations entered this old factory space it was entirely in ruins, and that they have invested their own money and labour to at least partially achieve their goals. This element is in no way considered in the accounting. At work is, obviously, an administrative racket.

One more example of the inadequacy or malice (depending on interpretation) of city policy is the space Jedinstva, which is assigned to Pogon, the Zagreb Centre for Independent Culture and Youth. In this case, an adequate institutional and administrative solution was found in the form of the establishment of a partnership between the City of Zagreb and a coalition of associations gathered together as the Alliance Operation City. But while the space itself is neither structurally or technically complete, is obviously deliberately not being invested in. This absurdity is not accidental. In this case, an institutional solution was developed in the independent scene, rather than with the authorities. Similarly, due to

the open criticism, or outspokenness, from those who lead the centre and those who use it, the lack of proper investment is deliberate and constant. All policies are reduced to superficial and short-term goals, in a cycle from election to election, or from budget to budget, with no clear strategy, nor rational thinking about the longer-term.

### **A National Syndrome: the Half Solution**

The situation in other cities in Croatia is not much better. Although Pula is perhaps the largest centre for civil society organisations, many of which operate in the field of culture and art, despite all the efforts of the users of the space an appropriate governance model has not yet been found for The Rojc Community Centre. In Rijeka, it is important to point out Molekula's many years of work, a small space from which several local organisations operate, but which, because of its characteristics, can not function well as a public space for diverse programs. A more ambitious project, Hartera, focuses primarily on the so-called cultural industry (or rather, the entertainment industry), but only through temporary projects, without significant investment. In Split the Dom Mladih (Youth House) has stood for decades in a half-finished state, with its limited capacity functioning as a home for a good part of Split's independent culture. Whether or not the Ministry of Culture will really invest any serious resources in the completion of the building and its planned facilities, as has been announced in recent media reports, remains to be seen. In Zadar, several organisations were recently given the use of the old puppet theatre building, but this is only a temporary solution, as the building is going to be demolished. In Dubrovnik the Lazareti Art Workshop, has for years been acting as an important social, cultural and artistic space, but because of the attractiveness of its location, it does so under constant pressure from local politics and so-called investors. The workshop's active participation in the citizen initiative 'Srd is Ours', which clearly articulates the strong opposition of the people of Dubrovnik to the project that will build private luxury villas and a golf course on Srdj mountain, is another example of the work of cultural organisations in the sphere of broader social issues. In eastern Croatia and many other regions, the space for those in the independent scene is almost non-existent.

### **The Independent Scene in the Battle for Space**

Precisely because of the problems arising from local policies about the management of space, as well as the barriers that are produced by certain legislative solutions and inert cultural policy, both at the local and national level, the subject of space is one of the key issues that organisations in the independent cultural scene in Croatia address in their advocacy campaigns and efforts.

In Croatia, the independent scene has developed in different stages. Although it is possible to look further into the past, what we usually call the independent scene are the civil associations and arts organisations that have emerged in the last 20 years or so. Thus, the formation of a good part of the independent scene is connected with the civil-social activity and resistance to the official nationalistic policies and the war of the 1990s. It experienced another period of intensive development at the beginning of the 2000s, when many organisations were recognised for their innovative programs, the introduction of new, socially relevant topics that were not strictly connected to artistic and aesthetic issues (human and social rights, queer culture, urban policy, etc.) and through connections with other fields (such as technology). At the same time there was a greater democratisation of society and public policy. Organisations that were at first more or less concentrated on themselves, on their own programming and organisational profile, very quickly began to associate and work together. Here it is necessary to point out the network Clubture, which brought together independent cultural organisations to form a collaborative platform. Also important, in this regard, is the work of individual organisations in different cities in Croatia, as well as their alliances and collaborative work at the local level (e.g. the Cooperative Platform Zagreb - Cultural Capital of Europe 3000, and Alliance Operation City). Organisations that work together like this, apart from exchanging programs and collaborating on projects, begin to rethink their own position in the overall cultural system, and to engage in cultural politics. Together they define their interests and needs, and demand specific system changes. So, although the independent cultural scene has developed new organisational forms, although its work is crucial for the development of contemporary art practice, as confirmed by the international recognition of many organisations, in general it is not given an adequate given position in the system. This is also the case in other countries that were part of the former Yugoslavia, where the cultural system was

dominated by public institutions which were almost automatically given the largest part (80-90%) of public resources (space, finances). In such a situation, an independent production company is in an unfavourable position, so it was necessary above all to come to arrangements that would at least partially bridge the huge gap between the public and civil sectors. The independent scene in Croatia has developed various models of their own work (a new type of networking, the so called tactical networks or collaborative platforms, such as Clubture), and has also developed methods of advocacy and activism, new production practices, the presentation and mediatisation of art, self education, etc., and have also demanded changes to the system. The cultural and political articulation which is developing is about the whole system, demanding change (including certain concrete steps), but also stands in defence of culture as a public good that is in the domain of public policy, and against more or less radical, still not strong, market-managerial tendencies.

### **An Institution of Independence: Pogon**

As an important achievement, both in terms of getting space, but, perhaps more importantly, in terms of the introduction of new institutional practices, we must highlight Pogon - The Center for Independent Culture and Youth ([www.upogoni.org](http://www.upogoni.org)). Pogon is an initiative from the Zagreb independent scene, established as a new hybrid institution (with the formal status of a public institution), based on a civil-public partnership, with the aim of providing free use of the spaces they manage to any non-profit program in the independent or youth scene. The founders of Pogon are the Association of Alliance Operation City and the City of Zagreb.

Pogon operates as an open platform for the programs of Zagreb's organisations in the independent culture and youth scene, informal groups, as well as creative and committed individuals. Pogon's program is not defined by aesthetic criteria, nor by any fixed programming or curatorial concept. Instead, it is determined politically - as a tool with which to bridge the huge gap between the public sector and the independent scene. The program limits are defined by its mission; the objectives are very broad, and so the program includes a wide variety of events in the field of contemporary art, popular and urban culture, a variety of interdisciplinary programs, educational activities, public debates and lectures. At the same time, Pogon's resources are often used for production and other needs of different organisations. Currently, Pogon has two spaces: Pogon Jedinstvo, with two multifunctional rooms (450m<sup>2</sup> and 80m<sup>2</sup>) and Pogon Mislavova, where, along with its offices, it offers conference rooms for smaller events and temporary office for organisations. The facilities and equipment may be used free of charge for any non-profit activities. At the same time, Pogon is developing its own activities, and is currently focusing on the international art residency program and European project Corners. In addition, Pogon supports the advocacy activities of Zagreb's organisations and encourages the participation of independent cultural organisations and artists in international cultural cooperation. So, among other things, Pogon is also an active member of the umbrella network for European cultural policy, Culture Action Europe, and the international network of contemporary performing arts IETM, whose annual plenary session they will host in October this year in Zagreb, together with other local organisations.

Of particular importance to Pogon is the method of its institution and management. Based on a partnership between local government and the civil networks of local organisations, it presents a new model in the Croatian (and wider regional) context. Through this format it is at the same time assured basic resources and institutional stability, as well as participation in its management and programming autonomy. This model allows long-term viability, as a result of a balanced relationship between public funding and oversight on the one hand, and independent programming and participatory decision-making on the other. The role of the City of Zagreb is to provide the spaces and adequate funds for the basic administration of the programs. The actual production of the programs is financed by the organisations that use the space, in other words, Pogon's partners, most of whom are members of the Alliance. Pogon is jointly managed by its co-founders and its director. Through the Program Council, which they select themselves from the organisations that are part of the Association of Alliance Operation City, the process of making programming decisions is done directly and exclusively by involved users. The founders monitor the work of Pogon, make important decisions about the activities and development of the centre, give their consent to the core documents and other acts, and appoint directors. The primary role of the Alliance is to bring together organisations working in this area and thus provide the programs that will take place at Pogon. In this way additional program funding from

a variety of domestic and foreign sources is also assured. By joining the Alliance, any organisation that wishes to can participate equally in the management of the centre. However, membership in the Alliance is not a requirement to have use of the facilities. In this way it is ensured that the overall functioning is under the control of both the founders, while the basic program management is in the hands of those who use Pogon's resources, or those who implement the programs. Pogon, therefore, is not an independent institution, but is independent of institutions - with respect to its basic purpose (to support independent organisations), in the way it is managed ( with participation in decision making) and with regard to its context (it was created on the initiative of independents).

### **There is No Alternative to Public Investment**

The sustainability of organisations that deal with arts and culture can generally be preserved in three ways: by maintaining the market, relying on private donations, or with grants from public funds. In our context, where there is almost no individual or corporate philanthropy, if we talk about culture and the arts as public goods, if we want to encourage a critical culture, and new artistic practices, and not let them become commodified, which is a necessary consequence of market principles, then the role of the public authorities is crucial. The logic is very simple: if a program or an organisation's work corresponds to what are called 'public cultural needs', then this work must be adequately supported, regardless of whether it's an institution founded by the government, or an independent civil-society organisation. It seems useful here to quote from David Edgar's article "Why should we fund the arts?" (The Guardian, 05/01/2012):

"It is this provocative mission that sets the arts apart from the other creative industries with which they are too easily lumped (by government and opposition alike)" It is not the role of advertisers, architects, antique sellers, computer game manufacturers or fashion designers to challenge the way society is run. But the arts do it all the time. As David Lan puts it, dissent is necessary to democracy, and democratic governments should have an interest in preserving sites in which that dissent can be expressed."

There is no alternative to public investment. The only alternative that does exist is different public funding and different management of spaces in the public domain.

## **A BRIEF (QUEER) REMINIS CENCE**

**BY DUŠAN MALJKOVIĆ**

Even though political climate was all but bad during the 90's of the last century in Serbia, we can arguably say that alternative culture was very present during that period, and perhaps even had some of its peaks of creativity. Under the shadow of the war, poverty and later NATO interventions there were centres of arts and theory that politically opposed the regime of Slobodan Milošević and, through artistic interventions, showed their disagreement with the current state of political affairs. Mostly supported by foreign foundations, though some were created almost ex nihilo, such projects showed that there are no arts that are separated from politics, and that such traumatic times can also be a source of great inspiration and rebellion in culture.

### **I. CZKD – The Center for Cultural Decontamination**

First, I would like to start with The Center for Cultural Decontamination (CZKD) in Belgrade, Serbia, an independent cultural institution that works to allow "the progressive forces of society to surge into

new, unfettered forms of cultural and art creation". Through performances, exhibitions, concerts, public discussions, lecture series, street actions and miscellaneous inoculations that have involved thousands of people over fifteen years, CZKD worked "to promote freedom of expression, freedom for creativity and freedom from fear". It is both a producer and a venue. Its own creations have toured domestically and internationally, in neighbouring countries, throughout the rest of Europe and as far away as Colombia. The director of CZKD, the famous or infamous Borka Pavičević – it depends on your political stance – has become one of the major public icons of the so called Second Serbia, a block of liberal NGO's, institutions, and individuals critical towards the mainstream nationalistic politics from a pro-European and human rights point of view.

Over the years, CZKD has worked with leading figures in regional, European and worldwide cultural and social movements, such as Nancy Adler, Bibi Andersson, Bogdan Bogdanović, Anna Cataldi, Roberto Ciulli, Adem Demaqi etc. Some of the Institutions that CZKD has worked with include The Theater an der Ruhr/Germany, Teatro Bologna/Italy, European Capital of Culture/Stockholm, Teatar Tvrnica/Zagreb, Theater Under Siege/Sarajevo, MOT/Skopje, FIAT/Podgorica, MES/Sarajevo, Gates Theatre/London, HetVeen Theater/Amsterdam, Festival International Cervantino/Bogota, the Museum of Contemporary Art/Belgrade, the Museum of Contemporary Art/Skopje, Dodona/Priština.

Some of the most important and successful productions include Primabalerina, choreographer and director Sonja Vukičević's theatre performances, of which Macbeth/It (Makbet/ono) is the most famous and successful. Sonja was one of the most prominent performance artists of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), the "Karen Kain of the Balkans," appearing at the youth political and cultural manifestations called slet in front of the marshal Josip Broz Tito, president of SFRJ at that time. She remembers Yugoslavia in the following manner:

"It was a fantastic country and I did not see the hatred between the people, and I travelled a lot. We had the most beautiful country in Europe, with all the possibilities, diverse ideas and different nations. Now we're broken up by regions, and this is, in my opinion, a form of slavery-democratic social order. I name it like that because I have nothing."

Macbeth/It represents a post-modern view of Shakespeare's classic text, using influences from popular culture, such as techno music from the band Prodigy, which was very popular at that time (1996). It is mostly a choreographic performance with a strong emphasis on Sonja's dancing expression and it also represents an exercise in body strength limits, because it is extremely hard to perform the required tiring and complicated acts that one must endure. It played for almost three years in Belgrade and was presented at different international theatre festivals in Skopje, Budva, Rijeka, Ljubljana, Amsterdam, Barcelona, New York etc. But what is probably the most interesting fact is that Sonja played Macbeth/It in front of the police cordon during the Student protest of 1996-97, when the temperature was 7°C below zero, expressing her disagreement with the regime of Slobodan Milošević and protesting against election fraud. All people with whistles had free admission to that performance – whistles were the symbol of that movement, because people used to produce noise during Dnevnik 2, the most infamous news broadcast of the government controlled Radio Television of Serbia (RTS).

## II. CINEMA REX

Another important venue I would like to mention is Cinema REX, the cultural centre of Radio B92, the famous independent radio station founded in 1989, also in opposition of the regime of Slobodan Milošević. It is situated in an old part of the town, so called Dorćol, in Jevrejska Street, and the very building it occupies was erected at the beginning of the 1930s, according to the plans drawn up by the architect Samuel Sumbul. It was commissioned by the Jewish charities "Oneg Shabbat" and "Gemilut Hasadim". After the Second World War, the building was nationalized and used for various purposes. At the beginning of the 1990s, BIOSKOP REX (Cinema REX) was written on its facade, which is how it got its current name. The centre officially opened in 1994.

The premise of Cinema REX was that Belgrade needed many arenas for the expression of artistic potential, and thus it has provided resources and facilities for creating new works, as well as presenting existing works within Yugoslav and international theatre, fine arts, music, film, video and new media; It has housed promotions and discussions and was actively involved in contemporary social and political development, as well as providing a forum for issues which official institutions shied away from or could not afford.



In 1998 Cinema REX had more than 300 different programs in their own space and organized 20 programs in bigger towns all over Serbia. On April 2, 1999, a new management illegally seized control of all of B92 – the radio station and its subsidiary video production, publishing and internet departments. The employees of Cinema Rex were evicted but refused to give up, and under the name Cyberrex, the cultural centre survived its exile on the fledgling internet as well as in various venues all over Belgrade. The REX Cultural Center came back to Jevrejska Street in October 2000 after the fall of Slobodan Milošević's regime, and returned to the fold of the radio station, B92.

Cinema REX has been one of the most queer-friendly cultural centres in Serbia. First it hosted the exhibition entitled 100 Years of Gay Activism in Germany in 2000, including references to Magnus Hirschfeld, the most prominent advocate for homosexual emancipation (one of his petitions against the criminalization of homosexuality was signed by Albert Einstein himself) and the creator of the concept of the "third sex" that explains same-sex orientation as a characteristic of bodies that are not strictly male or female (he sent one of his early works to Karl Marx, asking for support). The centre has also shown a lot of original photos of transvestism in the 19th century, shown the film Wittgenstein (directed by Derek Jarman in 1993, about the life and love of the famous gay Austrian philosopher), and hosted public debates regarding the legalization of gay marriage and adoption of children.

In 2011, as a continuation of this project after a decade, Cinema REX hosted the exhibition Article 1, a project whose title comes from the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". Created by the Swedish artist Ulf Peterson, the exhibition gathered artefacts regarding LGBT people – erotic photographs, old books, gramophone records etc. – from several museums – the Swedish Police Museum, the Swedish Army Museum, the Nobel Museum, the National Museum of Science and Technology and the National Museum of Antiquities – and arranged them into a conceptual exhibition aimed at reclaiming the first step of gay liberation: visibility, the fact that "queers are here". It was accompanied by the presentation of 15 years of LGBT activism in Serbia, including a timeline marking important events, such as the forming of the first gay and lesbian organizations in 1994, the first Pride Parade in 2000, the first gay magazine etc. The exhibition also involved prominent local individuals important for the gay scene in Serbia and included the lecture Hidden sexuality in Yugoslavian art: the case of Nasta Rojc, by Olga Dimitrijević, which examined the sexual life of one of the first academic female painters in Croatia in the 19th century; a presentation of QT, a magazine for queer theory and culture, in the form of a discussion about the underground "gay and satanic" cinematography of Kenneth Anger (b. 1927); and promotion of a biography of the gay mathematician Alan Turing, The Man Who Knew Too Much, written by David Leavitt, a gay American writer and professor at the University of Florida.

Finally, just one week ago, Cinema REX co-produced the cabaret Behind the Mirror, an initiative which began in the winter of 2011 at the request of a group of transgender sex workers in Belgrade. It joins them and other artists in depicting the societal norms and political and legal frameworks which influence the social status and lives of this marginalized group, ultimately seeking to engage the public in a broader discourse on human rights issues. This moving performance presents the lives of two transsexual prostitutes who are actually playing themselves, with a lot of singing and dancing (they used the local folk music that they like), mixing the comedy and tragedy of their existence in equal measures ("being a queen on the stage and a slave in private life, always adored and never loved"), making the audience cry and laugh at the same time. Thus, this is not purely an artistic project, but rather a political tool for reducing transphobia, and which proved its own necessity on the day of its premiere when a group of football hooligans tried to crash the performance; fortunately, they were stopped by the police.

### **III. DOB**

Dom Omladine Belgrade (DOB) is a cultural centre of the City of Belgrade. It actively promotes youth programs in the fields of contemporary art and culture. It covers almost all artistic disciplines and forms: visual arts and new media, film, music, theatre etc. Educational and debate programs have been DOB's trademark for decades. The basic principles and criteria in program planning are innovation and being up-to-date (contemporary in every sense of the word).

Founded in 1964, and located in the centre of Belgrade, Dom Omladine has for years been a focal meeting point of Belgrade's youth. Every year over 180 000 young people visit the more than one thousand programs held by DOB. Various programs take place in the six halls (of which five are multifunctional) and lobbies, occupying more than 5,000 square meters on 5 floors: the Large Hall, the Americana Hall (named so because the Embassy of the USA funded the renovation of the centre), Klub DOB, the Gallery, the Panel Hall, American Corner, and the recently formed Magacin (for more alternative happenings). Flexibility and adaptability refer not only to the spaces in the centre, but also to its program conception and high production standards. DOB functions not only as a platform for promoting new artists, ideas and initiatives, but also as a platform for connecting institutional and non-institutional culture.

After the election of the new, "non-government" director Milan Lučić, after the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milošević, Dom Omladine again began to be an "open" cultural centre, a sort of avant-garde place for new artistic and political tendencies. It not only hosts the gay and lesbian film festival Merlinka (named for the nickname of the transsexual worker Merlinka who "looked like" Marilyn Monroe), which began in 2009, as well as IDAHOO WEEK, a local Serbian "interpretation" of the international event marking the International Day against Homophobia, but it is also hospitable towards the appearance of queer issues in all of its programs dealing with literature, visual arts etc.

But it is with a description of another kind of event that I would like to end this brief presentation. After the recent renovation that has lasted several years – considered by some to be too long a period for such an enterprise – a group of artist and historians (Ana Vilenca, Saša Stojanović i Aleksa Golijanin) performed A Class in History, drawing to public attention the plaque which states that Dom Omladine was built with the support of Josip Broz Tito, the leader of the Communist Party. From the point of view of this group, it is a contribution to the so-called political revisionism that is currently in ascendance all over Europe, which attempts to eradicate the positive influence of the socialist era and equalize the communist project with fascism/Nazism. Thus, they have placed another plaque, claiming: "At this place, using funds from the US government, the City Council and the Investment Agency, history has been erased". The police interfered, as well as members of security (one artist got beaten), which provoked a public scandal and raised questions of freedom of artistic expression, and the role of politics in the interpretation of history.

However, this remains to be one of the most provocative acts of "guerilla artists" which shows, as I have previously said, an unbreakable connection between art and politics, where the arts become a vessel of political intervention, and politics becomes the field where legitimate artistic action finds inspiration and takes place. In the 90s the fight was with the autocratic regime of Slobodan Milošević, and now, in the new millennium, artists struggle for LGBT equality and a reduction of discrimination based on sexual orientation, or, on the other hand, they question the legitimacy of the so called global neo-liberalism taking its form in a never-ending transitional process in Serbia, with all its faults and misleading informations.



Cinema Rex



Dom Omladine Belgrade

Through two examples of “space conquest” which occurred in Belgrade over the past year, we seek to explain the current situation regarding the spaces for independent culture and art, as well as the ongoing struggles in the sphere of public goods.

The disappearance of public spaces is becoming an increasingly common fact associated with modern cities. Current urban development tendencies, driven by market-oriented interests, represent a huge threat to public spaces, and therefore to alternative cultural activities as well. The disappearance of public spaces and the emergence of quasi-public structures occur in parallel with the aggression of commercial culture and the appearance of cultural spectacle. The city is changing in a way that favours the expansion of trade, information overload and commercialization, largely at the expense of its citizens. The spaces are losing their identity; they are being alienated, even though they are real and socially defined.

Public spaces, in terms of their characteristics and their function, serve a public purpose; they enable social communication and are accessible and open to anyone. Public spaces are places of high intensity exchange within urban physical structures, sort of a spontaneous theatre where the exchange of words and symbols occurs. They have always been an essential component of the artificial environment, providing basic human needs (rest, leisure, recreation ...) and the framework for everyday life.

No matter how we define the term ‘public space’, we must bear in mind that it implies not only the right to freely access a specific space, but also the right to participate in its use, either individually or collectively. Therefore, public space is a space that each individual has the right to access, and the right to use for those activities which are not in conflict with the rights of other individuals or groups that are also using it.

The idea of “the right to the city,” conceived and advocated by French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, implies precisely the right of every citizen to the resources of the city and to freely participate in the life of their local community. Guided by this idea, several examples of activism have emerged, mainly at the micro level, as a response to the seizures of and threats to public spaces. Likewise, we are witnessing an emergence of youth activism triggered by voluntaristic impulses and reflected in the “conquest” of abandoned structures, in an attempt to create a space which would be freed from profit dictates and focused on providing basic human needs.

In many cities throughout Serbia there is a significant number of abandoned buildings: military barracks (An interesting case occurred at the end of 2011, when a group of activists entered the former military facility “Dr Arčibald Rajs” (Dr Archibald Rice) in Novi Sad. After 22 days, activists were expelled from the barracks by military and civilian police), ruined industrial plants, unsuccessfully privatized public enterprises, and so on, while, on the other hand, there is also a growing need for spaces for social activism, artistic action and different forms of cultural production. In view of that, the revitalization of these spaces is one of the ways to provide much-needed working space, and is certainly a potential that could stimulate the development of cultural and creative industry. For this reason, it is necessary to act within public spaces in order to bring the issue to the broader public, given that the actions taken at the grassroots level can contribute to achieving the desired goals, which in turn will help meet specific social needs.

The large number of abandoned buildings being occupied throughout Europe (in Hamburg, Berlin, Madrid...), and in some cities in this region (Ljubljana, Zagreb, Pula...), reflects the citizens’ involvement in the struggle for active participation in shaping the cities they live in. In recent years, in Serbia as well, there is an evident increase in the awareness among the citizens about the need to take action to reactivate and revitalize disused spaces. Some cities have recently witnessed a wave of different initiatives for “space conquest” (Inex Film - Belgrade, Social Center - Novi Sad, Photo Expo - Zrenjanin,

etc. Different initiatives were also launched in Sombor, Smederevo, Niš and Kragujevac). It is clear that the issue is becoming increasingly present in public discussion. Youth and artistic groups in search for spaces are getting stronger as they realize that the results and performed actions will help them achieve more in their struggle.

#### **- Inex Film <sup>1</sup>**

One such example is the building situated in the Belgrade suburb of Kraburma, formerly owned by Inex Film, a defunct public company from the previous era. The action launched by young individuals and groups, many of whom are artists, started in April 2011.

Inex film was a public cinematographic company engaged in film production and distribution, as part of a former large Yugoslavian enterprise group – Inex Interexport. When the initiative was launched, the Inex Film building, which exceeds 1500 square meters, was abandoned and completely devastated, bearing no traces of its history. Today, we can perceive it through the very paradigm of brutal capitalist transition and privatization, which we've been witnessing in the last couple of years.

The Inex Film Expedition, as the initiative is called, explores the possibilities of self-organization, solidarity, and the "do it yourself" philosophy of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It gathers together individuals and organizations in need of a space for their creative work and cultural production, and who, despite their knowledge and willingness, generally have limited or no access to necessary resources. With the intent to conquer the much needed working space, the Expedition members located the Inex Film building and started working on its revitalization. At first, the activities were focused on cleaning up and restoring the building itself and its surroundings, but shortly afterwards the space started to be used to host gatherings, discussions, exhibitions and art interventions.

Experimental visual arts, site-specific artistic or architectural interventions, performances and guerrilla art, contribute to the development of strategies for accessing urban spaces. Any interested group or individual may propose and implement content that then becomes part of a collective effort to reorganize the space and enable it for creative work and the exchange of ideas and knowledge.

One of the clear objectives of the Expedition is to promote youth participation in social development. Since the building was occupied a series of events have been organized, among which are: the exhibition "World Communal Heritage" by Rene Readle and Vladan Jeremić; the workshop "Activism and public spaces" led by Dušan Šaponja and Dušan Čavić; the launch of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Micro Festival of Amateur Film; the seven-day festival "Art and Shovels"; the comic-book festival "New Age"; the exhibition "From Dionysian Socialism to Predatory Capitalism" organized by the Center for Visual Culture, a department within the Museum of Contemporary Art; the forum "Artist as Audience"; numerous concerts and DJ performances, and many other events.

The interest and involvement of the large number of people who gather around Inex Film, is the best proof of the importance it has for the community.

The model used for occupying this building is called *squatting*. This term refers to an illegal occupation of a building or space that the squatter does not own, rent or otherwise have permission to use. There are two main groups of squatters, those who occupy spaces because they are existentially jeopardized, and those who need space for the realization of their ideas (artists, activists, cultural entrepreneurs). Inex Film squatters belong to the second category. The examples from the region (Slovenia - Metelkova, Pekarna, Croatia - Rojc, Medika) represent squats organized as multifunctional cultural centres, with art studios, alternative libraries, computer centres, mini editorial boards for publishing journals and magazines, galleries, clubs, alternative theatres, cinemas and concert halls, children's centres and sports clubs. Today, the squats are places where we can encounter great creative energy and rich cultural production.

Lately, squatting is seen less as usurpation and more as space recycling, i.e. the conversion of a neglected and unused space into a "living" one. Of course, there are other ways for acquiring spaces, such as the negotiations with local authorities, but this route can be long and complicated, since the institutions and local authorities are not usually open to negotiations. Moreover, they are insufficiently

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1 <http://ekspedicijainexfilm.blogspot.com>  
<http://www.facebook.com/InexFilm>

informed, slow in decision-making, and often filled with prejudice when it comes to such initiatives.

### **- Street Gallery<sup>2</sup>**

The aforementioned thesis is further supported by the experience of Micro Art<sup>3</sup>, a youth organization which launched the initiative to establish the first street gallery in Belgrade. In this particular case, it took nearly two years from the initial event which inspired the idea (the informal exhibition of the works of the Italian artist Luca Donnini, May 2010) until the goal was finally accomplished – in April 2012. The Street Gallery project represents a pioneer venture in achieving the allocation of an abandoned space to a citizen group for cultural production purposes.

First, it was necessary to ensure that the idea of public space utilization is very well formulated, so that the project could be properly presented to the different target groups which had an active role in its implementation. Some of the reasons why this process took such a long time are related to the fact that the decision making procedures which affect urban development are rather unclear, while there is a general apathy among the stakeholders towards the problems in their local community (especially those related to spatial issues).

The first formal step in obtaining the space was to determine the owner. The initial assumption was that the space belongs to Kozara, the movie theatre which previously used that passageway. However, the fate of Kozara was very complicated and unclear, since the new owner of Beograd Film<sup>4</sup>, to whom the cinema was privatized, sold it to a company based in the Bahamas. In the meantime, the only source of information was the press, so the initiators of the project started contacting all the names that were ever mentioned in relation to the space. The press was flooded with articles in which the responsibility for maintenance in Bezistan (the place where the gallery is situated) was attributed to various utility companies and institutions: Gradsko zelenilo, Beograd put, the Secretariat of Transport, etc.

The first concrete results were achieved when other organizations started supporting the idea, among which: the non-governmental organization Civic Initiatives, through their programme “Open about Public Spaces”, the Municipality of Stari Grad, and the Belgrade Youth Office. Soon it was discovered that the real owner of the space in Bezistan is the City Agency for Commercial Space. The entire process clearly illustrates how unclear and intricate the regulations governing the sphere of public goods in our cities are, thus preventing citizens from accessing and utilizing them in an adequate manner.

Somewhat later, a meeting was held with the representatives of the Agency, who expressed their will to cede the space for art production purposes. However, another obstacle appeared – the Agency was not allowed to allocate spaces without pecuniary compensation. For this reason, the Agency and the Municipality had their legal departments create a model which would enable the Agency to cede the use and maintenance of the space to municipal authorities, following prior approval issued by the Cabinet of the Mayor, stating that the space may be used exclusively for non-profit, artistic purposes. Upon the signing of this document, the space was officially handed to the Municipality.

Meanwhile, it became imperative to formally define the Street Gallery initiative. That is how the Citizens Association “Micro Art” was officially established. Micro Art was then required to formally apply to the Municipality with a proposal describing the initiative. That application was then passed to the Municipal Council, which adopted the decision to allocate the space to the Association Micro Art, for a period of three years, with the possibility to extend the contract. Subsequently, the Municipality and Micro Art

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2 <http://www.facebook.com/UlicnaGalerija>

3 <http://www.mikroart.rs/>

4 Beograd Film was a public enterprise which administered 14 Belgrade movie theatres and was privatized to an “English businessman” Nikola Đivanović in 2006. Immediately after the expiry of the contractual obligations (2008), Đivanović started selling the theatres. In early 2011 Nikola Đivanović was arrested for financial fraud related to these privatizations. Since then, the fate of the theatres has remained uncertain. In mid 2011, a series of actions was launched under the slogan “The Written Off Return”, aimed at drawing attention to the problem of neglected cinema halls. For more information about this initiative see <http://povratakotpisanih.wordpress.com>, <http://www.facebook.com/BioskopiPovratakOtpisanih>

concluded the Agreement on Legal and Technical Cooperation, according to which the Municipality is obliged to restore the space, while Micro Art assumes the responsibility to provide necessary funding for art exhibitions.

It took nearly six months from the first time the willingness to meet the initiative requests was formally expressed before the final agreement was signed. What followed was the elaboration of the architectural project, the preparation of technical documentation, and the selection of contractors. The construction work started in early January 2012 but were soon suspended due to adverse weather conditions, which lasted nearly two months. The restoration was finally completed in early April 2012. The Gallery was officially opened on April 20, 2012, although it had not yet been entirely reconstructed according to the project.

The Street Gallery is located in the centre of Belgrade, in the passageway that connects Nikola Pašić Square and Nušićeva street. The walls identified as potential exhibition space were previously used by the Kozara<sup>5</sup> movie theatre for posters that announced the film repertoire. The Gallery is composed of nine exhibition niches (each 1.4 metres wide and 1.8 metres high), divided into three segments.

The first activities within the Gallery were related to informal exhibitions held in a devastated and neglected urban structure. Over time, pressed by a constant need to present the initiative to a wider audience, Micro Art has managed to elaborate a solution which could be defined as urban spatial intervention with a pronounced aspect of social engagement. In many respects it represents a pioneer venture that can serve as a model for future similar initiatives.

In accordance with the aforementioned definition, the Gallery will mainly host socially engaged art exhibitions, while devoting special attention to young, still unacknowledged artists. By relocating the art into the public space, its accessibility expands to a larger number of people, which is especially important when dealing with issues that are traditionally ignored and practically invisible in society. Issues that, in the right measure, can best be felt and communicated by an artist. In this way, the public space acquires a new function, the artists a new place for exhibiting their work, the city a new centre of culture, and the visitors an opportunity to enjoy the art in a unique environment.

As these kinds of projects and initiatives have become increasingly frequent in modern cities, they have also grown to be part of the program for urban renovation, which serves to define strategic locations in which large public funds must be invested in restoration, in order to improve the attractiveness of the city. A special role within urban regeneration programs is given to the city's cultural policies. Cultural programs that catch the attention of a large number of visitors, such as festivals, art events and public space interventions, are considered very important in attracting investors and a creative workforce. Due to the complexity of the program, it was necessary to elaborate special models for urban space renewal. Two such models are discussed below.

In the second half of the 1990s, most cities turned to the integration of different artistic and cultural projects intended to revive public spaces, as well as art-based projects aimed at promoting greater participation from the citizens in shaping their immediate surroundings. Graeme Evans (2005) uses the term 'cultural regeneration' to indicate the approach to urban regeneration based on the implementation of artistic projects centred on working with local communities. The role of local authorities in these programs is to identify and develop strategies which will use art and culture in the effort to regenerate those urban areas that have suffered economic and physical decline.

Barcelona is one of the most successful examples of the integration of cultural activity into planning and development processes. Basic elements underpinning the urban regeneration plan for the city of Barcelona, are given by the strategies for the restoration of public spaces and the development of urban design, as well as by those related to cultural planning and the establishment of cultural districts.

The second model is based on the notion of 'the creative city'. The concept of the creative city is built around the idea that urban renewal must rely on the development of creative industries which are the main potential for future economic development. Creative industries are based on individual creativity,

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5 Due to the unsuccessful privatization, Kozara cinema hall has remained closed since 2006. Like the cinema itself, the exhibition panels were also neglected and ruined. In the meantime, the whole passageway, although de facto a public space, has been turned into an illegal parking space controlled by private interests.



skill and talent, and have the potential for capital formation and job creation. One interesting example we should mention here is the case of a squat located in Hamburg, where local authorities, through the project called "Hamburg: City of Talent", adopted a strategy which resulted in purchasing a portion of land from the investor, who intended to use it for commercial purposes, and allocating it to the squatters. Today, this part of the town houses a community of artists, individuals and groups which are engaged in the revitalization of the district they live in.

Inex Film and the Street Gallery represent, so to speak, spaces conquered for a limited time. However, they suggest that, in the long run, only greater citizen involvement in urban development issues, including the processes of public space revitalization, and major cooperation among local institutions and city authorities, can contribute to the quality of the urban environment, both in the socio-cultural and the economic domain. Art in public spaces may become part of the creative and economic capital of the city, as well as part of the urban identity. Perhaps the greatest quality of this approach lies in the fact that stimulating people to take part in these kinds of initiatives, and thus fostering greater participation in urban planning, generates greater sense of belonging and community among citizens.

## EMPTY SPACE - POS SIBLE SPACE

INTERVIEWS BY VANJA NIKOLIĆ

"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged"  
Peter Brook, *The Deadly Theatre: The Empty Space*, 1968

In terms of space for independent art and culture, Belgrade and Novi Sad are in great need, and are far behind other towns in this region. Last year these two towns became important in this area, due to several actions and initiatives that were more or less successful. Belgrade succeeded in acquiring the Inex Film space as a free space for cultural productions, and Novi Sad tried to get the military building, Dr Arčibald Rajs, that has not been used by the army for years now. Both initiatives have their good and bad sides, and problems that are still to be solved, as well as conflict and disagreements that often seem to occur when something this big is going on. Due to all of these reasons, what was first planned as one interview with three people has become three separate interviews, as each person had their own perspective and personal involvement in the questions I needed to ask and in which questions they could or could not answer. As all of these interviews became longer conversations, what I present here are the highlights.

**Marko Aksentijević** ([ekspedicijainexfilm.blogspot.com](http://ekspedicijainexfilm.blogspot.com)) is an activist and a member of the Inex Film Expedition. He is one of the people who entered the Inex Film building, and is still there working to make it better. With the experience he has gained with this group, he is organizing events that consider public spaces as well as the public will to participate in creating such spaces.

### Public Spaces in Theory and Practice

The clearest definition of public space is a space to which everyone has access at any time, such as a park, square, street etc. What happens to those areas can be very interesting. Commercialization comes in the form of billboards and various other types of advertisements, as well as a narrowing of the streets or parks due to encroaching commercial content. For example, by law in Belgrade, the available

pavement has to be seven metres wide, but here where we are is only 2.5 metres, if not less. In that way streets have no function other than traffic, while pedestrians just pass through, and of course if the two meet it becomes problematic. And of course there is a lack of interest in such spaces. This can often be interpreted as a need for a sort of village principle, where people come out on the street, bring stools, sit there, and conduct their social lives in such public spaces. Other change is seen when what is used to be squares and market places no longer fulfil the same function. All social interaction now is transferred to the shopping malls, which are necessarily commercial. There is no possibility to sit down somewhere and not pay to drink something. It has all turned to consumerism, and there are policies that you will be removed if you do something inappropriate in that place. This is the problem that made me start working on this subject. I am annoyed by buses that carry signs, billboards, and every kind of marketing. Unlike newspapers and television which you do not need to read or watch if you don't want to, you can not avoid seeing, when looking out your window, politicians on billboards or other people who are selling you a better life. We simply do not have a choice, and we are bombarded with these advertisements. On the other hand, graffiti is considered highly illegal, and it is a serious offence if they catch you writing graffiti, but this is the only medium available to everyone, the most democratic medium today, apart from the Internet. So in that sense, these public spaces are under attack from all sides, and there is a neglect of the citizens, as the authorities benefit from the advertising and parking revenue. It is especially interesting here, because our advertising sector is connected to the mayor. Problems can be reported to the relevant offices (for example, bus advertising is not allowed to go over the bus windows), but complaining achieves nothing, because the mayor is in charge of it all, and he can change the rule so that advertising can go anywhere on the bus. This is a serious problem.

Organizing something in a public space was an unexplored area for me. The mayor's cabinet has to approve the organization of anything in the centre of town. So you have no right to do something in a public space without approval from the authorities. This is ironic, because if you want to protest against the ruling regime, they need to give you permission for it. This supposedly applies only to the town centre. So I do not know to what extent this is a standardized procedure, but in any case there is a high unavailability of public space. The question is, what would happen if you put a table and chairs on the street? Police would probably come and make you leave. This is insane. Ultimately, the availability of public space is a prerequisite of any individual rebellion. When you lose the right to the streets and lanes then you have no place to express your dissatisfaction, other than through newspapers, the internet and other such means.

Other spaces in which there is some social interaction, such as cinemas, theatres, stadiums, all those places are especially important because of the creation of social capital. There, different people can share in activities, which develops more trust between people, as they share something in common with the other people in that place. This is very important for society as it builds confidence in democracy. In social theory it is present as the use of public space.

### **The Independent scene in Belgrade: Are the streets a space for artistic activity?**

I am really not an artist, not even an employee in the culture, but I know that there is a large amount of appeal in using street space for artistic works, due to the lack of venues. I am a bit sceptical towards this. I can understand that the state does not address the needs of cultural workers and artists, and that the cultural policy is flawed. On the other hand, the lack of space should not be an excuse for the artist not to create. The artist creates wherever he can. So if your need to express is really strong, you will do something about it, regardless of the conditions. If you want to perform Hamlet, there is a certain expectation that it will be a serious production, but if those conditions are not there then you make do with whatever you have. It is understandable that there are some standards. If the impossibility of achieving these standards prevents you from creating at all, then you change your standards, change your text, you do a critique of the conditions through your artwork. The conditions will never be great, so you should work with what you have.

### **Inex Film: The Beginning.**

The genesis of the team that moved into the Inex Film building is quite strange. They originally came together as a team that needed space, but they were very sceptical when we appeared on the scene with the suggestion of Inex Film. The first reaction was that squatting is illegal, that it would be too expensive, etc. At the second meeting there were four or five people, compared to the original 35. The initial team that came together with the idea of trying to find some space that could serve its original



purpose of cultural production quickly disappeared, but we wanted to organize something in the space anyway. We had two clean-up weekends followed by events. In that way we entered into a rhythm, so that there was always an event. Little by little, we've cleaned up a lot of rooms, and it has grown into a functional layout. At some point people started closing off spaces for their own studios, workshops, classrooms. These are not people who came here initially, but simply a team that, for various reasons, came later. People came because they do not have anywhere else to work and wanted something to do, or they were simply in the mood to try to be there as long as it lasts.

The space is privately owned. We found this out later. We originally thought that it still belonged to the bankrupt company Inex Film. It turned out that they were unable to privatize the company, so they sold its assets to a private individual who purchased it with plans to build a residential/commercial complex. But the global financial crisis, and different regulations for obtaining permits for buildings over 800m<sup>2</sup> slowed down the development, and the building rapidly began to deteriorate.

When the owner found out that we were there he was quite indifferent. He actually prefers to have someone in there that he knows. Of course he is explicit in saying that once the time comes to build something there, then we need to get out. It is in his private interest, but this then causes constant questions, especially from the actors of the independent cultural scene, about whether it is worth investing your work and time in something that will be destroyed. You are actually causing gentrification, and increasing the market value, and you do not get anything for it. On the other hand, being there saves everyone a lot of money. It's been nine months since the first artists moved in, so they have saved 9 months' rent, while having suitable conditions for working.

#### **How is the Inex Film collective organised? Are there meetings, is there a President?**

We have regular meetings. We have no president because we don't all agree on many issues, and certainly would not agree on who would be president. We can not agree on how to vote. There is a general view that decisions are made by consensus, and that there is a problem when we have to decide about something – we have very polarized viewpoints about whether we really need to vote. It is still in question, and I don't know if it will ever be solved. The whole thing happened a bit spontaneously and without any agreement. At one point it looked like the Wild West. At the very beginning there was some discussion about whether or not we needed to talk about each nail before it was hammered in. The theory was that we should talk everything before it was done. At this point, the group who believed that no one owns the space won, and it was more important that there was something happening, and not just debates all the time. But it has been rewarding because we would never have got the space into a state that could be used over the winter had we discussed everything over and over again, even though now we are in an awkward position where we need to agree on some principles retroactively that should have been established earlier. But you cannot say to someone that they should not do something that has already been done. At the meeting we had recently, nothing radical was decided. What is good is that there is general discussion and attempts to reach consensus on every issue. So there is organisation, there are regular meetings and assemblies.

#### **Inex Film artistic production.**

This project is mostly a matter of cultural production. There are people who are making spaces for workshops. According to the program it is all very eclectic. Some believe that entering the space was an offence, others think that it is a political act that not only solves the problem of space, but also draws attention to social issues. The Inex Film community is far from the ideal, but it works. It is a heterogeneous community of individuals. Ultimately it is in our interest to have as much in the program as possible, and to establish the space in which we are creating something as relevant.

#### **What is the future of the Inex Film project?**

We have started talking about the future, about what happens when the owner appears and says goodbye to us. We've never had a unanimous view on any issue, but during this time we are here to offer as many programs and events in this space as we can. In that way we will have the right to continue later, by seeking placement elsewhere. It's an uncertain future, but you know life is also uncertain. Often the question is why we did this, when someone can throw us out tomorrow. I think that the place and the people there have a lot more to offer in the future, but the initial investment of time and energy is now justified to some extent. On the independent scene they sit and discuss cultural policies, and whether we can let our work be taken by the ruling caste of big business. It should not be

allowed for someone else to exploit our work. I agree with that, to the extent that it is a question of class struggle. On the other hand you have the imperative of creativity, and one must work within the conditions available.

**Milan Vračar** (drustvenicentar.org), the leader of the organisation KulturaNova, has dealt with the problem of space in many ways. One of these ways was entering and gathering in the Dr Arčibald Rajs army barracks. Vračar was part of the initiative from the very beginning and sees the act of entering this building as an important issue.

### **Public spaces in Novi Sad.**

In the last few years Novi Sad has been going through a significant transformation. Entire neighbourhoods have been created, a lot invested in (residential) buildings, but there is still a lack of cinemas. The city's barracks is on sale, a fortress and its surrounds are on the verge of capitalization in the name of tourism. All of this is occurring at a time when the entire society is undergoing a structural, political and ideological transition, whose direction is determined by the general atmosphere of uncertainty. Due to the changing character of the management of the city, Novi Sad, perhaps more than other cities in the region, is going through streams of speculation in which the motives, objectives and responsibilities of the participants are not clear. Every citizen of Novi Sad is witness to the transformation of living space and urban culture, in which the public spaces are being privatized. Spaces dedicated to culture in Novi Sad are structures that aren't used at all as they could be. To mention just two examples: the Serbian National Theatre and Sports and the Business Centre of Vojvodina. In these many square feet of occupied structures, certainly more things could be happening than is currently the case.

### **How does Novi Sad compare to the rest of the region?**

The current situation in Serbia is comparable to that in Slovenia 40 years ago, or in Croatia 20 years ago. Both countries, at about those times, began to realize the importance of the independent scene, and there are positive examples of places that were conquered for the use of the independent scene. In Serbia this is still not happening.

### **The Initiative for a Public Space: The Main objectives of the Community Centre.**

The main objective of the Community Centre was to create a meeting place for gathering, for an interactive exchange of experiences, and to encourage the active participation of the citizens of Novi Sad; a place of creation, innovation and freedom to exchange knowledge and experience, and to acquire skills through learning and practice; a place for personal and community development, for support of all who contribute to the development of the community. Was it accomplished? Temporarily - yes. During the 22 days that we stayed in the barracks we lived in this small utopia. But we failed in something - in attracting a wider range of citizens, (mostly due to the fact that we were mostly focused on mere survival, such as a means of heating and so on), which would have helped to prolong our stay in the barracks.

### **The Structure of the Community Centre: Politics in Content.**

Everything was organized on the principle of direct democracy. There was an assembly which was comprised of all who wished to join it. There was a working group, a narrow group that consisted of all who wanted to do something concrete in the Initiative and to discuss some issues. There were some working sub-groups such as media, software, legal, technical, as well as editorial, project, and the like.

As a rule, these initiatives are oriented to the left, dealing with social issues. However in our society on one side we have disappointment in a rebellion and revolution that has not brought us much good since the 5th of October, 2000, while on the other hand we have a passionate nationalist movement, so the Initiative wanted to avoid any kind of politicization or flirting with the parties. However, entering the barracks is a political act and as such should be understood – people took matters into their own hands and wanted public property to become what it once was, public. Of course, it was possible to recognize some personal, but also some social issues. The space is a symbol, the program is the content. One without the other doesn't work, I think. Of course it is important that a program can be run (and was) out of a space, unless it's a street action, etc., but then it can not have the same effect as it would if it were done in such a space.

### **What is the significance of public space for the development of the independent scene?**

As with previous issues, space is important in terms of creating continuous production and, perhaps more importantly, for realizing the synergies between the different actors and the independent cultural scene.

### **The image of the artists who created events in these spaces is often at a disadvantage in relation to the ones working through arts institutions. How can we influence the changing of this attitude?**

I disagree with this statement. First, what kind of space is this all about? The point is that there are none, nor can we generally talk about such spaces at this level, therefore I do not think there is a general opinion about them, nor about the artists who created them. On the other hand, it is true that institutions *zvrje* are mostly empty, so I also see scope for an independent culture.

**Zoran Pantelić** (kuda.org) is a member of the kuda.org group, working on several projects, and has for many years been involved in researching the topic of public spaces and cultural politics. The film *Otvorene Kasarne* was at the same time the end of one project and the beginning of a new initiative whose goal was to get into the Dr Arčibald Rajs military building, and also to gain a platform for dialogue about civil society.

### **The film *Otvorene Kasarne* as an initiator of the discussion on the public space crises.**

My statements in the film are the result of an investigation. For the last two years we have been working with architects. We focused on trying to define the word 'space'. In terms of urban architecture we are talking about a crisis of space. In the film we asked our speakers to define space in a basic way, so that people can easily understand that their right to use and have public space is denied. In this sense our attention was to say something about the crisis of public space and, particularly, to point at 20 years of transition and privatisation. The structures that look after public space changed from the pyramidal structure of an autocratic political regime, to the liberal market model of public or private corporations. And the available spaces began to disappear.

### **The film's origins.**

There are several important things. We first made fake newspapers. They emerged from the work with the group with whom we made *The Vocabulary of Urban Dilemmas*. There we wanted to make a comparison between Belgrade and Novi Sad. I can't call all this a project, just a process of detecting all the problems, and choosing a starting point, and taking something that could be treated as a case study. We wanted to make an index of problems. All the things that we put in the fake newspaper were already in the media, but scattered and dispersed over 20 years.

The film arose from there. We did it from a completely different angle as part of a three-year European project with Tirana and Sarajevo. The project was called *Frame, Individual utopia: Then and Now*. We analysed all the neo-avantgarde movements, and their general ideas of utopia in the 60's and 70's, and asked the question of where we are today. So the film started out in TV format, and then we realized that we already had a half-hour feature, only using the research material. When we talked about this film we realized it was in itself an instrument, a means to something. Then the question became a means to what? Our core idea was to make the film an instrument to bring people together. The goal was to establish a community centre. Due to the different ideas of many who were gathered around this, we have now replaced this thesis. I find completely absurd that everything that happens is now called a community centre.

### **The Development of the Social centre.**

We did a short tour with the show in some places such as cafés, a university. After that 70 or 100 people gathered. Many of them just came to hear what was actually happening. Fewer people were really ready to engage in the whole story. We wanted to open the question of how to create something called a Social centre. In the film we saw some examples of other towns like Ljubljana and Pula, but all of them had very different contexts, and Novi Sad at that time had a different perspective. All of this needed to be recognized. You need to understand the context. All these cities have gone through different phases. In particular, Pula is quite different, as it has a much larger number of empty spaces, and the attitude of the Croatian Army was completely different to here. The show was supposed to

raise the question, and we started the whole story in order to document it. In September, the working meetings started. We created something we called the Working Group and the idea was to agree on how to begin a dialogue about the whole thing. That was the first thing we didn't agree about. So we never made an agreement how something was going to be agreed. We used models that were supposed to create results that never happened. In short, what we presented as potential issues that should be discussed was seen by one group as unimportant topics. They rushed into everything, due to obvious inexperience, ignorance and inability to resolve complex situations. They just wanted to jump into some space as soon as possible. That is understandable as a fact that having a space is a clearly visible result. But they weren't ready to seriously discuss anything. Every discussion was stopped and interrupted with a very rough explanation that processes like that do not in any way allow action. This is a very classic, traditional, conservative vision of opposing action in relation to theory. That group could not understand that discussion and action are the ideal combination. They believed that everything that we were dealing with in conversation was slowing down the action. Whatever we called theoretical practice, we had to simplify the language, so that the community could participate in it. We actually wanted to open up the platform and get some results within a few months of working together. I feel frustrated because we were not able to do that, because all that we suggested was dismissed from the start. We could not even explain what we wanted, simply because of the heterogeneity of the group, due to the different levels of experience of all who were there.

We had already experienced projects like City Network Dizalica, which started in 2004, and then, in 2008, the project For Cultural Policy. In the meantime, we had established The Black House. So there are some clear processes in which we had participated and where we saw big problems. For that reason we proposed the creation of the platform, that could be expanded on a much broader front, which would mean a longer-term understanding of the need to patiently build a plan. I think that the failure of the initiative for the Social Centre was due to this. In such a critical situation, with a lack of flexibility or culture of dialogue, everything led to disagreements and quarrels. Then we realized that this was not the place for us any more. It becomes completely ineffective to spend time in a place where you will be insulted and crushed when you attempt to deliver criticism.

### **Squatting the Military barracks = Social centre.**

The entry into the barracks was one in a series of misunderstandings. It could be said that people will burn out if they don't have an exact date. I can understand that when you have a certain date for something it is a form of strong motivation. Still, we are talking about a life decision here, and if you are certain about it, there is no possibility of burning out. Therefore it was necessary to come to a consensus. We did not manage to do it. For me the idea was hijacked by the group of people who repeated the mistakes that I had recognized in our earlier projects. We were able to agree on the idea, but we wanted it to be a result of communication. Unfortunately, a group of people hijacked the idea and presented themselves as the leaders of something. That December, when they planned to enter the barracks, we tried to explain to them that they should use the time before the election, which has happened just recently. They should have reached out to the public until April, and then entering the barracks would be a kind of public action, and everyone in the community would know very well why it happened, and it could be a really huge, massive entry into the space. This would erase the possibility of any dialogue between the civil community and the army. Then it is really a social action. There were 200 people in the initial occupation, which was then reduced to one hundred, which is understandable because the conditions were unacceptable. I honestly think that the act of kicking them out was a relief. If it didn't happen they would have left by themselves, as it was impossible to be there in such a cold winter, without basic infrastructure.

### **The Social Centre Today.**

I do not understand what is happening there now and I am not even interested in it. I have had direct contact with these people, and I have realized that there is no capacity to understand the situation, to politicize the role. That is, of course, the reason why I came to this state. When we were talking, we were explaining why one should politicize the whole thing and why it really should be a political action. We came to a situation where certain groups of people who presented themselves as the leaders would enter the space and get into open negotiations with the city mayor. They declared it to be an apolitical movement. This just means that from the beginning they didn't understand anything. They accepted the idea of not using their political power, and thereby putting themselves on an equal

footing with a possible negotiator. In this way they just became an instrument of the government for the recapitalization of certain things.

They did not interpret their own position as a political entity. At the same time they expected people to support them. I think the extra misunderstanding came from their website and other media. Which had many texts, many ideas, some of which were starting from positions that wanted to interpret and explain a possible platform for the Community centre, arising from the discussions in September. So if someone wants to get information from the site now, they may get confused, because it is a mixture of articles from various people who were proposing ideas but who eventually left the whole thing, and from someone who obviously still does not know or understand the whole thing and can't make it clear. That is why a lot of people are confused, and back in December I got a lot of requests to comment on the matter. We said that we are not interested in it any more, and why that was so, and then we were dropped from the list, and we realized that our opinion was no longer needed, and the story ended. In fact now, five months later, I really do not know what they are doing. It's like a little secret, and everything is contrary to what we were talking about, as we were talking about transparency throughout the action.

### **Program planning.**

In the Community Centre there was no program, it didn't even begin to be created. Conflict emerged in the process of agreeing how something will be done. Conflict emerged at the very beginning. I don't have a solution for something like that. It must be a process. There must be a theme of political awakening of ideas and the attitude of the community. The question is, who in the initiative has the general awareness of what we want to do? We did not have time to do it. We did not find an answer to the first question. Especially as it concerned a very specific moment and problem. Novi Sad, of all cities in the country, didn't seem to be interested in discussing state ownership or the demilitarization of the municipality. This was an ideal opportunity to ask the political question: why is the city not interested? Now instead of problematizing it, we returned to the situation in which 15 people don't have a studio for their work.

The question of space is an issue that can be compared with the question of which came first, the chicken or the egg. The classic, traditional, capitalist organization of the city is one of the problems. The essence of the disapproval and criticism of a town such as Novi Sad is precisely that there is an alarming lack of programs. Here is a hypothetical analogy: if we imagined that we could, tomorrow, create a museum of contemporary art, a Concert Hall, and all that is missing, we would then wonder who would create the program there and what would it be like. This is a complex matter. Space is only a symbolic pedestal from which a particular message is, arguably, sent.

### **The Independent Scene in Novi Sad.**

There I am quite critical because I think that the scene is very small. It is now reduced to a group of individuals. Even less, if we want to talk about activism, a commitment to social relations, critiques of the mainstream. And in the examples that exist in this city, we realize that within the small collectives a pyramidal structure of power exists. I realize that what is done within these small collectives is only one structural resemblance to the mainstream, and that they consider themselves alternative or independent according to how close they are to a pillar of funding. The program is actually little different from mainstream. In that sense I think the independent scene is almost non-existent. When we talk about the scene, the scene doesn't exist. We talk about the biological scene. Biological in the sense that I can count on my fingers people my age who are still in business. Others have drowned, gone, disappeared. This is a society that is cruel and to fight it you need more substance. And then when we talk about the scene, we talk about the new biological beings that have emerged from the academy and how, for the next 10 years, they will be full of energy and keen for any exposure.

It is in the management structure that I see the problem, and therefore it is already a question of independence. The other problem is the question of independent or alternative space. It all ends in this one very prosaic, conservative field of representation. If you made a decision, and the decision is that you are fluid, invisible, it means that the program should be present in other ways. It is this paradox, a large building in the city centre is a priori guaranteed visibility. But Novi Sad is small enough to face the problem of a Cultural Centre that is still empty. It is renovated and everything was done, but there is no content. And then we come to the new model. Various models of cooperation between the independent

and the mainstream give further confirmation of this symbiosis, when the independent scene is presented in this Cultural Centre.

### **The Street as a Place of Events in Novi Sad.**

Novi Sad is problematic in that sense, as it can be viewed through the idea of festivalisation, which is not generally a problem. Festivalisation is a legitimate form. The problem is when we think about financing, as festivals have completely killed cultural production. The whole form of public culture is transformed into a kind of fun. The program is completely mummified, because it doesn't actually exist. We end up with a serious crisis because we are again back to something that cannot articulate a critical language. Then a Community centre appears, and it also does not criticize, even though it's criticizing was its purpose. Through such a platform, the demilitarization of large areas to provide for small groups who are doing something original for the community can allow them to become part of a stronger, louder platform for the whole community of the city. It didn't go in that direction. I think we are still very far from it.

## **THE RADIO ACTIVITY OF MOLEKULA**

**BY DAVOR MIŠKOVIĆ**

The Molekula space was established in 2007, and since then has functioned as a private-public partnership between six organizations and the public, whose involvement is perhaps less than that of the organizations. The organizations share a non-affiliation to the institutional cultural sector, which generally means that they do not receive the basic resources they need to perform their activities. Molekula was created to solve the problem of lack of space experienced by these six organizations. It has partly solved the physical problem, but another problem, or perhaps I should say challenge, remains in the field of culture.

When Molekula was founded, it seemed to me that the fundamental problem of the independent cultural scene was its underprivileged position, which impedes organizational growth, stable long-term planning, the creation of its own spaces, and which eventually leads to a negative social attitude towards those who are active in this scene. Lack of privilege is naturally associated with the lack of resources necessary for operational functioning, among which space occupies an important place.

But in the Croatian independent cultural scene, space is also recognized as an important issue because public space seems to be disappearing. In the past decade the unthinkable has started to happen: citizens are denied access to beaches, access to public squares is being eroded, and garages are taking over pedestrian zones. Thus public space is becoming a commodity that is not available to all, but only to some. This disappearance of public space is also concerning to people in the independent cultural scene because it seems that the ground is being taken from under their feet. Specifically, the independent cultural scene always defines itself through, among other things, the values that it advocates, among them the value of the public sphere.

In such a constellation of conditions, it seems that obtaining a space that would serve as both working and presentation space, and that is available to the public in either case, is in itself sufficient to cause a change in the relations with society, and to promote cultural and artistic work in the city. However, is it really so? After five years of work in Molekula, both in the alliance and the space, we are a little wiser, and we can say with certainty - space is not the solution.



Our view of space, as well as of money or any material matter is as a resource is necessary to create something else. But what else? After five years of work in Molekula, it is clear that this space is not a resource such as iron in a shipyard from which we can create a boat. The output of our work is nothing external. It's not any kind of goods or services, although we do produce and serve; the output of our work is ourselves.

In this sense, space is not a resource. It is a part of us, and it is therefore impossible to observe separately the space of Molekula. It seems to us that the independent cultural scene requires a biological, organic approach to work, as observed from the perspective that we are producing and creating ourselves. In the independent cultural scene are created structures composed of different elements that produce these same elements to maintain their own structure - autopoiesis. Molekula is one such body, created by a range of elements — space, organization, money, people, events - who are there primarily to create Molekula.

What is space in this constellation? It is Molekula itself. In itself it is nothing more than one element in the composition of the organization. But a problem arises, because this organization is made up of other organizations that want to be independent entities and in whose structure the space is also one of the elements that maintain these structures. This is why, from the beginning, there was the desire to divide the space of this enormous building, and to designate them to others, and in this way integrate them into this sub-organism, Molekula. So the parts of Molekula were designated Prostorija (directly associated with the association Prostor Plus, which organizes dance workshops in Prostorija) and SIZ Gallery (the gallery program of one of Molekula's member organisations, Drugo More). Both of these names have disappeared - Prostorija atrophied, and SIZ has become independent both as an organization and as a space, and is no longer part of Molekula.

The very moment of this designation is a symptom of the relationship between space and organization. The structure of the organization must have control over the elements that make up that structure, and the elements must be integrated into the structure. At least, so it seems from the perspective of the structure. This is a systemic logic in which systems of a higher order integrate systems of a lower order, just as the contents of every large Russian nesting dolls are all the other, smaller dolls. But what happens in the cases where the dolls are not uniform or are too ungainly, and therefore do not fit into each other? In other words, what happens when the functions of the system are not arranged so that they are able to fit into each other? In this case, if integration is even possible, we have a structure that resembles an Escher lithograph, where one gravitational force is not sufficient, but rather three are needed to hold the elements together.

Space itself always has its attraction; people gravitate towards it, as do cultural programs. Where is the attraction? As in physics, it about mass. Mass is the key factor that creates the attraction. Why



do people gather in large cities? Because they like to be next to each other? Probably not. Rather, it's because of the great benefits that density brings. the concentration of possibilities and suffusion of knowledge that occurs in such compactness.

But Molekula doesn't have that density. It is mainly empty, and if it attracts someone, it attracts them precisely because there is space. And from such emptiness the waste matter leaves, those who are not accepted into its centre, or who themselves do not accept the centre. If it were something else, not just emptiness, Molekula would have to create mass, and, in a social sense, mass is the sum of the interactions that occur in a particular space. There are simply not enough of these interactions.

Molekula, in its current form, is a gelatinous mass; it is sticky, and envelops those who are nearby. They are unable to free themselves. On the other hand, it does not attract others; its force is too weak to act as attraction. It is therefore necessary to integrate the space of Molekula as soon as possible into an organizational structure in which the space will gain meaning, and not simply be an empty place. If we even want some meaning, if we even want to attract.

This critique is relevant only in a social sense, where there are great expectations for Molekula. Most of the space functions in an instrumental way. Therefore, we are not attracted by its attractiveness, but because in it we can just perform some task. The space is, in this sense, really just protection from the weather and nothing more. Molekula is a shelter, and it performs that function brilliantly for those who take shelter in it. It is not a shelter for bums, but rather for people who work. These people generally work for less money than people in other shelters; their work mainly produces products that other people do not want, or do not know how to use, but they absolutely invest themselves in their work. Of course, these desires can be considered insane or meaningless, but when meaning is the criterion for human action, then the question is what we would consider of value. Because Molekula is valuable. It is a place in which one works.

However, its value is also due to something else, and that is that the low threshold of entry into Molekula. It is not necessary to meet any amazing conditions to be able to enter and do something in Molekula. In this sense, it is a shelter that is not open to everyone, but to the majority.

So, to summarize what has happened with Molekula in its past 5 years of existence: there have been hundreds of public events, hours of work have been poured into it, and at least a few have found their haven. On the other hand, a phase of part-dissolution has begun, and Molekula has lost one member, although there are members who are still very involved. From my perspective, as someone who spends everyday in Molekula, I'm happy to have found a haven that is comfortable, warm, and has a nice view. At the same time, it is unfortunate that Molekula has not become more than a shelter, regardless of all our interactions. It is clear that there are structural reasons for this, but this understanding does not make anyone happy longer than the flash of the insight lasts.



# UPCOMING AND UP&COMING IN THE REGION

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## BOSNIA

Elma Selman

It's time

May 18, 2012 @ 20H

Gallery IPC, Luledžina bb, Sarajevo

Exhibition curated by Sanela Nuhanović

Time. Time as indefinite continued progress of existence and events that occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future. Time as measurement of duration of events and sequences between them, time as history, time as "what clocks measure", time as a moment, an hour, life... Art has always been seen through the lance of time/time deterrent events and, just as life itself, has moments when everything seems to come together and something what will be remembered in the future happens.

Tanzelarija (Bosnia and Herzegovina) / Performa Ars International (Montenegro)

Without borders – inclusion, culture and art

May 19 – 24, 2012

Performance / workshop / presentation

[www.tanzelarija.org](http://www.tanzelarija.org)

Danica Arapović

Reset

May 19, 2012 @ 20H

Sarajevo War Theatre SARTR, Gabelina 16, Sarajevo

Coproduction: Group "Let's..." and Cultural institute "Vuk Karadžić", Belgrade, Serbia

International acrobatics and dance festival

August 20 – 26, 2012

Krupa na Vrbasu

[www.cirkusbanjaluka.wordpress.com](http://www.cirkusbanjaluka.wordpress.com)

## CROATIA

Mila Čuljak, Tanja Kalčić, Ana Jurčić, Josip Maršić

Lieux de memoire

diptyque

May 5, 2012 @ 19H (premiere)

Platforma.HR, Zagreb

June 30, 2012 @ 21H

Molekula, Delta 5/1, Rijeka

performers: Mila Čuljak and Tanja Kalčić

Saša Božić / de facto

Boys don't cry

May 31, 2012

Dance week festival / Zagreb Dance Center, Ilica 10, Zagreb

[www.defactoart.com](http://www.defactoart.com)

## EUROKAZ 2012

June 28 – July 2, 2012

Inviting world's renowned theatre, dance and performance artists since 1987, ERUOKAZ is considered the most important performing arts event in this part of Europe. Its concept emphasizes innovation and impulses that change the usual perception habits and help create new theatre languages.

This year the festival explores possibilities of innovation in music theatre, ranging from Pierre Rigal's rock concert "Micro" to avant-garde flamenco of Israel Galvan and music theatre piece "Antica" directed by Croatian director Branko Brezovec.

With its partner, the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb (MSU), EUROKAZ presents three performance/installation events by artists: Claudia Bosse, Eric Joris / Crew and Dalibor Martinis.

[www.eurokaz.hr](http://www.eurokaz.hr)

Željka Sančanin / k.o. kombinirane operacije

Topologies

July 6 – 8, 2012

Zagreb Dance Center, Ilica 10, Zagreb

## **ZOOM Festival 2012**

**September 6 – 12, 2012**

**HKD - Hrvatski kulturni dom na Sušaku, Strossmayerova 1,  
Hartera, Ružičeva bb,  
Filodramatica Korzo 28/1,**

**Molekula, Delta 5/1**

**[www.drugo-more.hr](http://www.drugo-more.hr)**

Schedule of events:

September 6 - Ligna "The New Man", Germany  
September 7 - Jeton Naziraj "Yue Medlin Yue", Kosovo  
September 8 - Tala "Tri skockana praščića" (children play), Croatia  
September 9 - VRUM "Baja Buf" (children play), Croatia  
September 9 - Doris Uhlich "More Than Enough", Austria  
September 10 - D.B. Indoš "Kriegspiel", Croatia  
September 11 - United Sorry "Lost in Space", Austria  
September 12 - Janez Janša, "Who is next?", Slovenia

## **KOSOVO**

**Jeton Neziraj / Blerta Rustemi – Neziraj**

**Yue Madeleine Yue**

**May 21, 2012**

**National Theater of Kosovo, Prishtina**

**May 23, 2012**

**CZKD, Belgrade**

This is a political drama about chaotic post-war Kosovo, but, before all, it is a drama about unwanted Roma in Europe. Away from those common stereotypes about Roma, away from that exoticism which usually accompanies Roma topics, "Yue Medlin Yue" is an intelligent drama that excellently reviews the emotional process that thousands of Roma people from Europe undergo, yielding to violent processes of repatriation.

**The performance is produced by: Qendra Multimedia**

**[www.qendra.org](http://www.qendra.org)**

## **SLOVENIA**



**Palle Granhoj**

**Men & Mahler**

**June 8 – 10, 2012 @ 20 H**

**Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana**

**Production: Bora Bora and New Web**

What do you get, if you put a female singer and eight male dancers from various countries together for eight weeks, and everyday deconstruct the work they create?

In *Men & Mahler* the focus is on the raw power of masculinity. Mahler's sorrowful and poetic music becomes a counter point to the male bonding and masculine playfulness, when eight virile and powerful bodies, strapped out in rubber ropes, crowding together on EUR-pallet and performing masculine archetypal rituals. Meanwhile the singer with an Attenboroughish soberness observes the game and lets her soul embrace the heartbreaking and grandiloquent song.

**[www.bunker.si/eng/](http://www.bunker.si/eng/)**

**Betontanc & The Original Tempo**

**Audition For Life**

**Japanese-Slovene co-production about the thin line between life and death**

**Directed by: Matjaž Pograjc, Masahiro Kinoshita**

**Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana, Ljubljana**

**June 11th - 15th at 9 pm**

**Production: Bunker Ljubljana, The Original Tempo**

## IDOCDE

Local Workshop in Ljubljana

JSKD; Ljubljana

June 14 - 16

Production: Emanat and partners in IDOCDE network, with support from Republic of Slovenia Public Fund for Cultural Activities and Pre-School Education and Grammar School Ljubljana

<http://emanat.si>

Ivica Buljan / Bernard Maria Koltès

In the Solitude of Cotton Fields (Dans la solitude des champs de coton)

June 21 - 23, 29 - 30, 2012

Aluminium Factory Tulum Kidričevo

coproduction Mini teater and MG Ptuj within EPK Maribor (European Capital of Culture)

[www.mini-teater.si/client.en/index.php](http://www.mini-teater.si/client.en/index.php)

Edward Clug

Divine Comedies

June 29, 2012 @ 20H

Španski Borci, Ljubljana

Co-production: BITEF Theatre and Budva City Theatre

[www.en-knap.com](http://www.en-knap.com)

15th International Festival Mladi levi

August 23 - September 2, 2012

Stara Elektrarna, Ljubljana

Production / Organization: Bunker

International festival Mladi levi is one of the more prominent annual events of the Bunker institution, bringing the most current stage performers from all over the world to Ljubljana. It bears a mark of a demanding artistic profile, placed within the arena of contemporary progressive theatre and takes pride in its reputation for discovering young talents. The Festival has a distinctive atmosphere, marked with creativity and vibrant spirit, curious audience and social nature.

Festival Mladi levi inhabits a place of encounters and surprises, continuously opening up to foreign artists and guests, who take pleasure in art and spread contemporary artistic or social topics in front of one another. It is a place of exchange as well as a cradle of new ideas, friendships and co-operations, which frequently extend beyond the local concepts or borders in the process of their growth.

<http://www.bunker.si/eng/>

## TOURS

Wanda & Nova de Viator

Frozen Images

June 1, 2012

Troubles Festival, Les Halles, Bruxelles (Belgium)

Maja Delak & Luka Prinčič

Transmittance # 2.1

June 2, 2012

Troubles Festival, Les Halles, Bruxelles (Belgium)

<http://emanat.si>

<http://wndv.si>

## OOPS

Concept and direction: Anita Wach & Bojan Jablanovec

Old Brewery New Dance, Poznań (Poland)

June 5, 2012

Production: Via Negativa

<http://vntheatre.com/en/>

[/www.starybrowarnowytaniec.pl/en](http://www.starybrowarnowytaniec.pl/en)

Trafik [Croatia] and The Necessary Stage [Singapore]

CROSSINGS

August 16 - 19, 2012

The Esplanade Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive, Singapore

collective: Harrison [Performer], Bani Haykal [Sound artist], Josip Maršić [Sound artist], Magdalena Lupi [Dramaturg], Haresh Sharma [Script Editor], Alvin Tan [Dramaturg], Žak Valenta [Performer], Loo Zihan [Multimedia artist], Najib Soiman [Performer], Edwin Liverić [Performer]

Crossings is a multi-disciplinary collaboration involving a collective of artists from Singapore and Croatia responding to issues of home, homeland and belonging. How do we connect whilst acknowledging and appreciating our differences? Created through a process of workshops and improvisations, the production asks fundamental questions that will make us confront who we are and how we can survive in today's global village.

[www.trafik.hr](http://www.trafik.hr)

[www.necessary.org](http://www.necessary.org)

[www.esplanade.com](http://www.esplanade.com)

# BALCAN CAN CONTEM- PORARY

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